

ABSTRACT

Disclosed is a processor having a normal execution mode and a host execution mode. A virtual machine monitor (VMM) operable in conjunction with the host execution mode creates at least one protected mode environment to operate guest software in a protected memory area. Responsive to a command to switch between protected modes, the VMM causes the processor to atomically switch between an original protected mode environment and a target protected mode environment. A virtual machine execution (VMX) mode may be utilized to enable virtual machine functionality for use in switching between protected modes.